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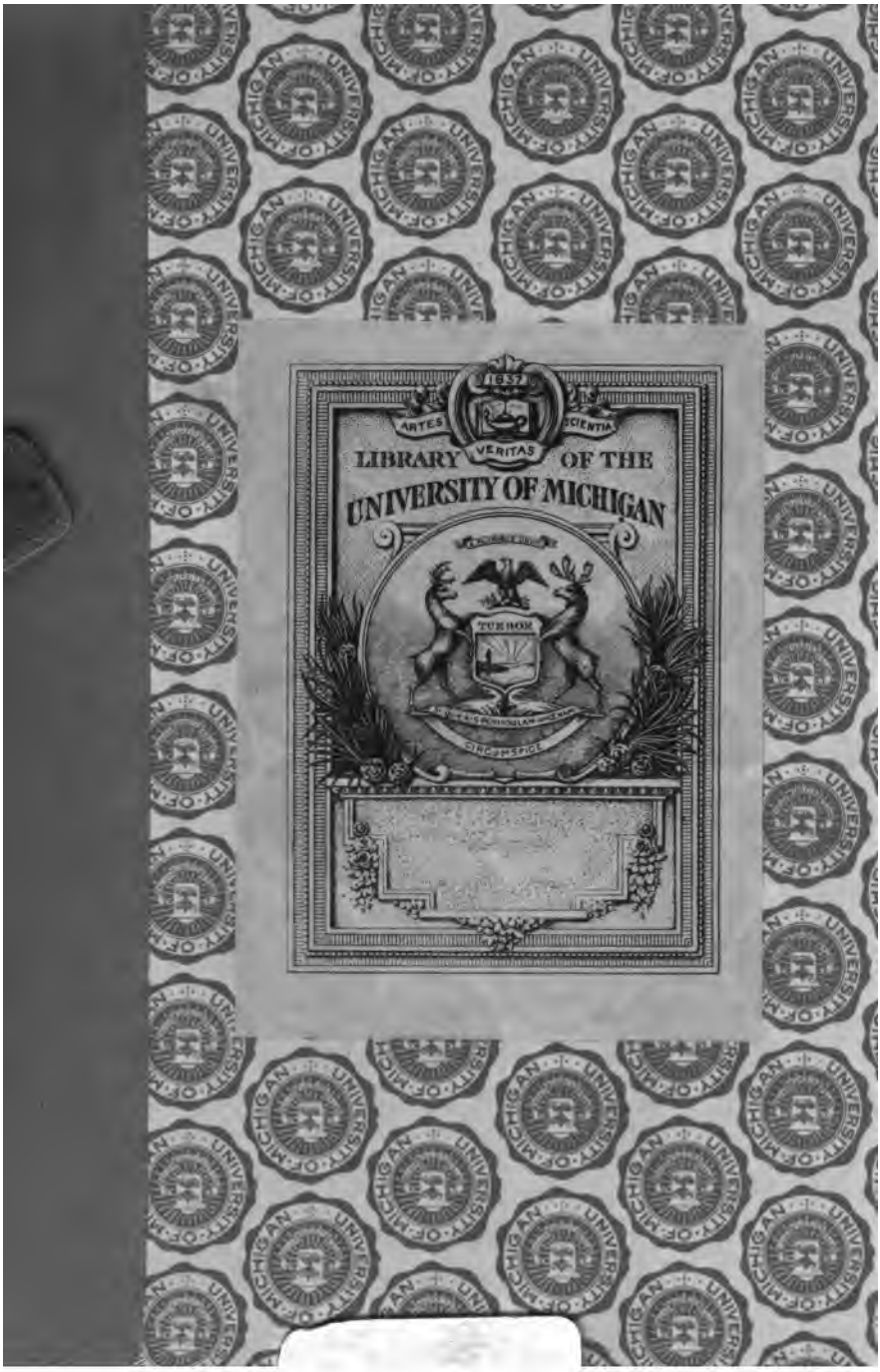
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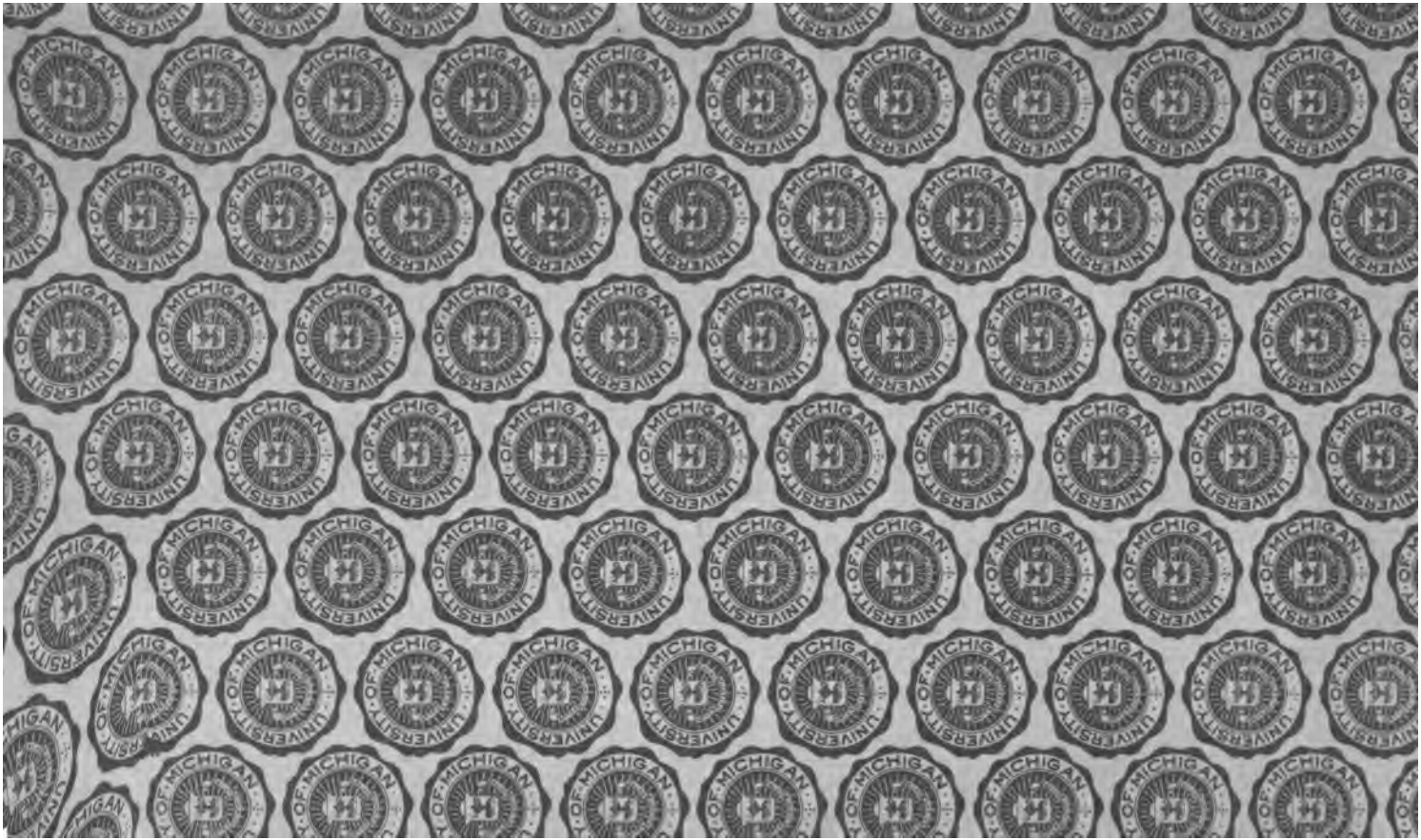
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MR. BUTLER'S

ADDRESS AT WESTPOINT.

THE

MILITARY PROFESSION

IN THE

UNITED STATES,

AND THE

MEANS OF PROMOTING ITS USEFULNESS AND HONOUR;

AN ADDRESS,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE DIALECTIC SOCIETY OF THE CORPS OF CADETS OF THE MILITARY ACADEMY, WESTPOINT,

AT THE CLOSE OF THE

ANNUAL EXAMINATION,

JUNE 19th, 1839.

By BENJAMIN F. BUTLER.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE SOCIETY.

NEW-YORK:

SAMUEL COLMAN, No. 8, ASTOR-HOUSE.

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H. LUDWIG, PRINTER,
No. 78, Vesey-street.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

WESTPOINT, JUNE 19th, 1839.

DEAR SIR,—

AT a Meeting of the DIALECTIC SOCIETY, held this evening, the following resolution was unanimously adopted:—

Resolved, That the thanks of the Society be presented to the HON. B. F. BUTLER, for his eloquent and appropriate Address, and that a copy be requested for publication.

In communicating to you the above resolution, we are performing a duty not the less gratifying, as we feel assured that you will favour us with your compliance.

We have the honour to be your obedient servants,

H. WAGER HALLECK,
E. B. GAITHER,
P. O. HEBERT,
C. P. KINGSBURY,
P. M. EDMONSTON,
} *Committee.*

To HON. B. F. BUTLER.

WESTPOINT, JUNE 20th, 1839.

GENTLEMEN,—

I have had the honour to receive your note of yesterday, and in compliance with the request of your society, will immediately prepare my address for publication. As it was written with much haste, I shall wish to enlarge a little the remarks on one or two of the topics, and to make such other corrections as may occur to me as desirable in revising it for the press; after which it will give me pleasure to place it at your disposal.

With friendly regards for yourselves and your associates,

I am, gentlemen, your obedient servant,

B. F. BUTLER.

Messrs. HALLECK, GAITHER, HEBERT,
KINGSBURY, AND EDMONSTON,
Committee, &c. &c.

ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN OF THE DIALECTIC SOCIETY,

WHEN I received, a few weeks since, the invitation which brings me before you, the pressing and laborious occupations in which I was employed, and which have ever since continued, would have induced me to decline almost any other application of the like nature; but my sense of the honour you had done me, in selecting me, to introduce a series of addresses to be annually delivered before your society, and my desire to co-operate in your endeavours to foster a literary taste among the members of this Institution, enforced by an apprehension that you might not, in the brief period allowed you, be able to supply my place, overcame all objections, and led to the engagement I am now about to fulfil.

* The Dialectic Society of the Military Academy has been in existence several years; but this is the first address of the kind delivered before it.

Under these circumstances, I cannot doubt your willingness, to extend a larger share of indulgence than might otherwise be proper, to some remarks, which I shall now proceed to lay before you, on *the Military profession in the United States, and on the means of promoting its usefulness and honour.* If my theme be not altogether of a literary nature, you will doubtless recognize it as not inappropriate to an association composed of military officers, or of candidates for the army; and if it be treated with even moderate success, it can scarcely fail to be instructive.

The genius of our political institutions, and the settled convictions of our people, forbid the maintenance among us, of large standing armies. They are justly dreaded, as productive of needless and wasteful expenditure; injurious to the habits and morals of the people; and dangerous to public liberty. Rather than encounter these evils, the founders of the American Republic deemed it wiser to rely, when armies should be wanted, on the militia, and on such regular forces as might then be raised. Their posterity have approved their decision, which may now be regarded as a fundamental maxim of our national policy.

Happily, too, our distance from the old world, and the favourable circumstances in which we have been placed, in respect to the other parts of this continent, have made it easy to adhere to this policy. In the fifty-six years which have elapsed since the acknowledgment of our national independence, we may be said to have enjoyed more than fifty-two of general peace; for the Indian wars which belong to the last named period, however calamitous to our border population, have been too local in their character to require a limitation of the remark. During this long tract of time, our people have cultivated the arts belonging to a condition so fortunate; knowledge, the friend of pacific institutions, has been widely diffused; commerce, the antagonist of war, has connected us, by amicable bands, with other nations; and the counsels of reason and interest have been confirmed and enforced by the moral and religious sentiment.

It is easy to see, that these tendencies have powerfully affected the more intelligent portions of our people. In addition to that large and respectable denomination of Christians which holds to the unlawfulness of war, even in self-defence, many members of other religious communions

have embraced the same theory; it has enlisted in its support many able pens; and has been pressed, especially within the last few years, by individuals and associations, with zeal and eloquence, on the public. A still greater number of our citizens regard war as unlawful, except in strict self-defence; and though the great mass have not embraced either of these doctrines, yet, under the influence of the various causes to which allusion has been made, our people have grown up with habits and feelings essentially pacific. Wars of mere ambition are held in just abhorrence; and the national mind seems to have adopted the sound conclusion, that war is always to be considered as a mere choice of evils, and is only to be resorted to, when forced upon us by actual hostilities, or by aggravated injustice deliberately inflicted, and obstinately persisted in.

Such being the nature of our institutions, and the habits and dispositions of our people, it is obvious, that the military profession can never acquire, within the United States, the commanding influence which belongs to it in many other countries. But though likely to be kept within narrow limits, and in constant subordination to the civil power, it cannot be given up.

Our experience, as an independent state, has clearly shown, that a permanent force, large enough to keep in check our savage neighbours, to fulfil towards them our treaty stipulations, and to garrison our more important fortifications; and capable of furnishing a considerable body of instructed officers, qualified to organize, in case of need, an efficient army, is indispensable to the preservation of peace on our borders, and with other nations. The history of our relations with the Indian tribes, from its beginning to the present hour, is one continued proof of this remark; and for a long series of years the treatment we received from European powers was a most humiliating illustration of its truth. Twice were we compelled to maintain, by open war, our quarrel with the principal aggressors; and the last of these conflicts, from the causes which provoked it, as well as from its severity and length, well deserves the appellation sometimes given to it, of a second war of Independence. After many years of forbearance and negotiation, our claims in other cases, were at length amicably settled; but in one of the most noted of these cases, it was not without much delay and imminent hazard of war, that the execution of the treaty was finally enforced. No one acquainted

with these portions of our history, can hesitate to ascribe much of the wantonness and duration of the wrongs we endured, to a knowledge, on the part of our assailants, of the scantiness and inefficiency of our military and naval force.

To this it may be added, that neither enlightened reason, nor "the more sure word of prophecy," justifies us in expecting the diffusion and establishment of those principles of justice and benevolence, which are to secure the reign of universal peace, until after the earth shall have been shaken by severe and desolating wars. These are the means usually employed by the Almighty, to scourge the nations; to overthrow the dominion of tyranny and wickedness; and to prepare the way for extensive and beneficent changes in the condition of mankind. They are the tornadoes and thunderings of the moral world, which are often needed, to purify the noxious or stagnant elements, and to usher in the clear and auspicious heavens. Let us never be tempted by the possession of military strength, to encroach on the rights of others, or to seek from those who have injured us, reparation by war, until forbearance ceases to be a virtue; but on the other hand, let us not dream that we can forever escape our share in a destiny, which

seems not yet to be fulfilled. Let us, at least, follow the plain counsels of history and prudence, and by a wise and constant attention to the means of defence, labour in a practical and safe way, to preserve and extend the blessings of peace.

Independently of the lessons taught us by experience, and of the prudential measures which a just estimate of the nature of man requires us to adopt, our present and prospective condition calls, in a peculiar manner, for care and circumspection. Our relations to the British provinces are full of difficulty and danger. The Indian tribes concentrated on our western boundary require the most vigilant attention. The new governments in the south are yet in too unsettled a state to be regarded without concern; and with some of them we have unsettled controversies. We are pushing our settlements into the northwest, and towards the Pacific; they may soon come in contact with the trading houses and colonies of Russia and Great Britain. The West India Islands, inhabited by a coloured population, a large portion of which is passing from bondage to freedom, may awaken, at no distant day, intense solicitude; and the commercial enterprise which is daily bearing to the

most distant regions, the name and products of our land, is often to be protected by the national arm. A new war among any of the great maritime powers of Europe will surely expose us to new aggressions, if we shall be found destitute of suitable preparations for repelling them.

The American army is thus seen to be maintained for purposes the most weighty and beneficent. It is kept up, not for conquest or aggression; not to overawe a restless population, or to decorate a pageant, or to furnish to a favoured few the means of livelihood at the expense of the rest of the community; but to preserve to us the blessings of external peace, and domestic tranquillity; to uphold the civil power; to maintain inviolate the liberties of the citizen; to secure from foreign powers, the faithful discharge of the duties they owe us; and to protect our country from those trespasses, which the proud and the powerful are so prone to commit, on the interests and honour of the weak and undefended. The vocation of the American soldier may therefore be regarded, as not less necessary and dignified, than that of our other public functionaries. All of them, whether executive, legislative, or judicial—whether en-

gaged in civil or in military life—are the servants of the people; and it is the duty and privilege of all, to labour for the common good—to spend and be spent, in the public service. The trust assigned to the military, is alike eminent and honourable. It is their high province, to guard the temple of American liberty; to defend it when menaced by open assault or secret machinations; and to secure to all, a safe and ready access to its altars.

For the proper discharge of their appropriate duties, the personal qualities of subordination and love of order; courage and vigilance; patriotism, justice and fortitude; honour and courtesy; are indispensable. Without these, no subordinate officer can rise to eminence; without these, his career, even if it do not end in positive disgrace, will always be inglorious.

It cannot be necessary, my young friends, that I should enlarge to you on this elementary truth. You learn it as a part of your daily instructions; it is enforced by your own observation and experience. In the cases of failure which have occurred during your connexion with the Academy; in your respective positions in your classes; in the regard in which you are held by your teachers and superiors; in the

estimate you have formed of each other; you have constant and living proof of its universality and importance. I would hope, too, that you connect with this principle, all your aspirations after honourable distinction; that you build on it, as the only sure corner-stone, your every plan of life; and that you seek no higher nor other fame, than such as may be won by a sacred adherence to its injunctions.

But though it were needless to dilate on the general considerations, connected with a topic so obvious and familiar, or on the several particulars included in it, there are two of them which I would strongly urge upon your regard—and the rather, because, whilst they form, in your profession, very essential elements of high character, and deserve to be cultivated from the commencement to the end of the military life, they are not always held in proper estimation, and by the young, especially, are too often regarded as matters of little moment. The points to which I allude are the first and the last in the enumeration just made—the foundation and the top-stone of the column—*subordination* and *courtesy*.

In the former of these qualities, I include, not merely due respect and prompt obedi-

ence to superior authority; but a cheerful and exact observance of every part and rule of discipline, in its whole extent, and in every specification, however minute or trivial. It is impossible to overrate the importance to the soldier, of this virtue. Military operations of every kind, depend, for their success, on the exactness and promptitude with which they are performed. This, in general, is only to be expected, from those officers and men, who have been accustomed to the regular and exact observance of minor duties; and accordingly the wise military commander, depends on the discipline, rather than on the number of his troops; and on their capacity and readiness to understand and to execute the orders they receive, rather than on physical energy or daring courage.

Whether, therefore, you look forward to the noiseless routine of ordinary duty, or the more stirring scenes of glorious war, you will find the habit of due subordination and of strict attention to particulars, indispensable to comfort, reputation, and success. This habit is only to be acquired in early life, when there is leisure for such matters, and when the mind is flexible, and the character easily moulded to the practice of duties, which, in after years, men have neither

time nor inclination to learn. Let me then urge it upon those who are to continue in this institution, to make it their constant and earnest study, to obey, in all things, the regulations prescribed for their observance; and let me exhort such of my auditory as are now to enter upon the active duties of their profession, to carry with them into the army, whatever of this habit they may have gained during their pupilage, and sedulously to cultivate it, not only as a means of usefulness and honour, but as constituting, in itself, an important and valuable end.

Many illustrations of the vital importance of subordination and discipline, might be offered; let a single one suffice. The usefulness and reputation of this noble academy, distinguished as it is, for the ability of its professors, and for the elevated standard of instruction it maintains, depend, perhaps, on nothing so much as on the state of its internal discipline. It was during the superintendence of that exact disciplinarian, whose praise is on every military lip, that it emerged from comparative obscurity, and took in its appropriate sciences, the first place among our public institutions; and if at any time its star has been transiently dimmed, it was because disci*pline* had first been incautiously relaxed. I

congratulate my country on the re-establishment, in their pristine vigour, within these walls, of the regularity and strictness of former days. May they never be intermitted!

The other point selected for remark—*courtesy*, is something more than a mere ornamental accomplishment. It has the high sanction of an apostolic precept binding upon all men, and is peculiarly needful in the military profession who should exhibit it towards members of the same profession in the service of other countries, and even towards enemies. It is especially due to the latter, when the fortune of war has placed them in a victor's hands.

The display of this quality during the middle ages, irradiated the darkness of the times, and gives, even now, to the institution of chivalry an enduring interest. We see in it, as then exhibited, the relics of a high and sacred morality; the germs of a new and more perfect civilization. If, in these days of light and moral advancement, we have the aid of nobler and more efficacious principles, it is yet exceedingly useful in smoothing "the wrinkled front of grim-visaged war;" in mitigating its evils; and in conducing to its just termination. During our last war with Great Britain, several instances

occurred, of mutual courtesy between officers of the contending armies, the good effects of which have not been limited to the circumstances which gave them birth. In the arrangement, recently concluded, by the intervention of Major General Scott, between the Governors of Maine and New Brunswick, the ancient friendships which had grown out of relations of this nature, were successfully appealed to; and every part of the difficult negociation was marked by a courtesy and judgment worthy of all praise.

Among associates in arms, it is only by a bland and gentlemanly deportment, that the tone of command can be divested of harshness, and the just and necessary authority of the superior be preserved, without grating on the feelings of the subordinate. It is not less important among equals; it prevents collisions; secures harmony; and gives a graceful and imposing air to the intercourse of the garrison and the camp. Toward persons in civil life, and especially in a republic, it is, for obvious reasons, a duty of great importance. It is pleasing to know, that this virtue is generally practised in the army of the United States; and particularly by those who have enjoyed the advantages of education in this place. Let it be your aim, my

young friends, in every part of your deportment, to exhibit, in all sincerity, this crowning grace of the accomplished soldier.

Before quitting this division of my subject, permit me to remind you, that the true foundation of all pure morality—the only one capable of sustaining, in well-balanced proportions, that difficult combination of the heroic and passive virtues, which forms the highest order of the military character—is solely to be found in the enlightened fear of God, and the diligent keeping of his commandments. The soldiers of heathen antiquity, whose names are yet held in honourable remembrance, were generally distinguished, according to the light they possessed, by their religious character; among the Jews, piety and valour were commonly united; the Christian soldier has often exhibited these qualities; and in our day we have many shining proofs, that there is no incompatibility between them. On the contrary, if there be any class of men, to whom, more than to all others, an abiding trust in the government and providence of God would seem to be important, the military profession, from the very nature of their duties, may, perhaps, be said to be that class. Exposed to peculiar temptations and perils, who

can need, more than they, the guidance and support of the Lord of Hosts—the God of wisdom, grace and consolation?

In addition to the personal qualities to which we have referred, it is requisite, that the American officer be well versed in the science and art of his profession, as they are now understood and practised.

The immense improvements in physical science, and the wonderful achievements of inventive art, which have distinguished the last fifty years, have been applied by Europeans, and especially by the French and English, to military purposes; and each year adds to the extent and perfection of these appliances. The departments of strategy, engineering, and pyrotechnics, and the higher branches of tactics embrace a large amount of professional science, which is only to be acquired by careful and laborious study, and by diligent attendance on the appropriate exercises.

An enlightened view of this truth led to the creation of this institution. In his last address to Congress, President Washington enforced, what he had before proposed, the establishment of a military academy, in the following passage, which I quote, at length, as not only giving the origin

of this institution, but, as it seems to me, presenting, in a very conclusive, though brief manner, the arguments in its favour.

"The institution of a military academy is also recommended by cogent reasons. However pacific the general policy of a nation may be, it ought never to be without an adequate stock of military knowledge for emergencies. The first, would impair the energy of its character, and both, would hazard its safety or expose it to greater evils, when war could not be avoided. Besides, that war might often not depend upon its own choice. In proportion as the observance of pacific maxims might exempt a nation from the necessity of practising the rules of the military art, ought to be its care in preserving and transmitting, by proper establishments, the knowledge of the art. Whatever argument may be drawn from particular examples, superficially viewed, a thorough examination of the subject will evince, that the art of war is at once comprehensive and complicated; that it demands much previous study; and that the possession of it, in its most improved and perfect state, is always of great moment to the security of a nation. This, therefore, ought to be a serious care of every government; and for this purpose an academy, where a regular course of

instruction is given, is an obvious expedient, which different nations have successfully employed."

The illustrious author of the declaration of independence, notwithstanding his strong repugnance to the trade of war, and his original objections to the establishment of a military academy when in the cabinet of Washington, became afterwards so fully persuaded of the truth of these principles, as to repeat, with much emphasis, the like commendation, and to favour, by his powerful influence, its adoption by Congress. To his administration, belongs the high honour of placing the Westpoint academy, on a solid and durable foundation; a fact, which if it do not atone, and more than atone, for the mistakes of the gunboat system, should, at least, disarm the pugnacious criticism of its opponents.

The view which prompted a statesman so thoroughly imbued with the humane philosophy of modern times, to encourage the cultivation of military science, was founded in a comprehensive survey of the subject; and should reconcile the most ardent advocates of peace to the studies to which you are devoted. All the sciences are intimately connected; and none can be pursued which will not reflect more or less of light upon all *others.* During the dark ages which followed

the wreck of the Roman power, the military science by which that power had been reared, was lost with other branches of learning. When learning revived, the military art revived with it, and contributed, not a little, to the restoration of the empire of mind, over that of brute force. Then, too, every great discovery in the art of war, has a life-saving and peace-promoting influence. The effects of the invention of gunpowder, are a familiar proof of this remark; and the same principle applies to the discoveries of modern times. By perfecting ourselves in military science —paradoxical as it may seem—we are therefore assisting in the diffusion of peace, and hastening on the approach of that period, when "swords shall be beaten into ploughshares, and spears into pruning hooks; when nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

But without extending our reflexions beyond the exigencies of our actual condition, nothing is more obvious, than the duty of providing and perpetuating a body of scientific engineers, artillerists, and other officers, competent to meet, on its own ground, the military science of the transatlantic powers.

It is true, that the annals of modern warfare give us the names of many commanders, who by the mere force of native genius, have attained the highest distinction. Our own history furnishes several such examples, from which, without injustice to others, three of great prominence may be selected—Nathaniel Greene—the friend of Washington and the deliverer of the South—a soldier from the anvil; and those later thunderbolts of war—"*duo fulmina belli*"—Jacob Brown—whose history and genius are singularly coincident with those of Greene —and Andrew Jackson—distinguished even among generals of this class, by quickness and decision; indomitable energy in the execution of his plans; and ability to control the most undisciplined troops, to infuse into their minds a portion of his own spirit, and to wield, at will, their united powers.

These instances, however, do not invalidate our argument. No battle can be fought, no military operation can be performed, without the aid of numerous subordinates; and in proportion to their scientific knowledge and practical skill, will be their ability to execute, with despatch and vigour, the orders of their commander. Indeed, unless, to a considerable extent, they possess these qualities, no degree of genius in the chief, no *amount of* courage in the army, can ensure suc-

cess. The self-taught commanders to whom we have alluded, are justly renowned for all the qualities which are needful to constitute the skilful captain. But these qualities, unsupported by intelligent assistants, more or less familiar with the military art, would only have led, in their conflicts with veterans, to abortive and disastrous results. To their victories over disciplined foes, knowledge and science, in the officers they commanded, were often large contributors. GREENE had the support of several experienced tactitians, and of disciplined subordinates and men. BROWN, in his maiden effort was upheld by Backus and other veterans; in his later exploits he had the aid of Scott and Ripley—the first named, even then, an accomplished general,—and of many instructed officers of inferior grade; and both BROWN and JACKSON were often benefitted by the military science acquired in this place. Not to speak of others, it was McREE, an *élève* of this Academy, who, on the field of Bridgewater, suggested the expediency of that perilous, but well-timed order, whose successful execution turned the tide of battle, and won for the modest MILLER, an imperishable wreath; and to him and to WOOD,—another son of this Institution, who fell at the head of his column in the sortie from Fort Erie, and whose worth

has been commemorated by his commander, in the monument that graces yonder plain—may justly be ascribed much of the glory of that memorable campaign.

It is also to be remembered, that of those who embrace the military profession, nearly all are required to commence as subalterns, and to serve, for long periods, in the subordinate grades; that comparatively few reach the command of a regiment; and that fewer still are destined to be placed at the head of an army. It is therefore plain, that every candidate for the profession of arms, should make the acquisition of military science, in its minutest details, the chief object of his pursuit; and that every other study should, as much as possible, be made subservient to this.

We are not, indeed, in our country, to expect, that every youth bred to this profession, will remain permanently attached to it. We have little opportunity for exciting and brilliant service; promotion is generally tardy; other occupations are more lucrative; and some of them may be entered with great advantage by the instructed soldier. These circumstances have induced many of our officers, even those who have enjoyed the advan*tages of a thorough* training for their stations, to

retire from the army at an early age. The graduates of this institution are accordingly to be found in every department of active life. Several are to be met at the Bar; some grace the Pulpit; others are distinguished as principals or professors in literary institutions; and many have rendered great service to their country, in the various branches of civil engineering. As it may be expected that similar relinquishments of the profession will occur hereafter, I do not suppose that you will all make it the business of your lives. And yet I would urge it upon you all, to apply yourselves to the acquisition of military science, as if the army were to be the exclusive field of your exertions. This accomplishment, should you remain in the service, will be invaluable; should you retire from it, you will not have derived from this Academy all the benefits it is capable of affording, and which were contemplated by its founders, unless you carry with you into the community such a knowledge of your profession, as to render you, when occasion requires it, active and useful in the defence of your country.

In thus giving the pre-eminence, as an object of pursuit, to the acquirement of professional knowledge, you will not understand me as intı-

mating that other sources of instruction are to be wholly overlooked. On the contrary, you will do well to mingle with your scientific studies a regular and constant attention to literature in general.

That the duties of the soldier are not inconsistent with the cultivation of letters, has been shown by many bright examples. Alexander had been a laborious student, under the guidance of Aristotle, before he entered on his military career; and the copy of the Iliad revised by his illustrious instructor, was the companion of his marches; his solace amid toils and dangers; the most constant and powerful of incentives. It was the character of Achilles that fired his mad ambition; and in his gigantic scheme of universal empire, he was stimulated and sustained by the strains of Homer. Warned by his fate, and guided by a philosophy purer than the Stagyrite's, you may adopt, without danger, the practice of his pupil, and in the native tongue of the prince of poets, or if that fountain of melody be sealed to you, in Cowper's plain but faithful and nervous version, or the polished strains of Pope, you may find "the tale of Troy divine," a feast for the reason as well as the fancy;—a stimulant of virtuous thought and wholesome energy.

That other brilliant name which history has

placed on the like "bad eminence" — the Roman conqueror, who, after filling the earth with the terror of his arms, turned them against his country, and built his tyrant throne on the ruins of her freedom — is still more closely identified with the pursuits of letters. He is not less distinguished by the purity and vigour of his style, than by the splendour of his victories; and his Commentaries will be read and admired, so long as cultivated taste shall continue to exist. It is said of him, that he spoke with the same force with which he fought; and that had he applied himself to oratory he would have been the only man in Rome capable of rivalling Cicero. Xenophon, less distinguished as a warrior, but equally conspicuous as a writer, should not be overlooked in this connexion; and from his gifted countrymen the names of Alcibiades and Themistocles, and the nobler ones of Epaminondas, Aristides, and Phocion may also be selected, as proofs of the compatibility of liberal studies, with the strictest attention to the science and practice of the military art. Several illustrious Romans might also be added to the list.

Distinguished instances of the like nature might be given from modern times; but I hasten to observe, lest my meaning should be misunderstood,

that it is neither to be expected nor desired, that every officer should aspire to literary fame, or that the profession, as a class, should be able to make very extensive attainments in polite learning. But since the cases referred to, have shown that even these are consistent with the most active military life, it may surely be affirmed, that the pleasures and advantages of literary pursuits are within the reach of all who are willing to give to them the requisite attention.

Many and cogent are the motives which should urge the candidate for the military profession, to cultivate, so far as primary duties will allow, a sound literary taste. Suffice it to say, that the love of letters, when united with a reasonably correct judgment, is an unfailing spring of profit and of delight, to which professional men of all classes, and especially those in military life, should frequently resort.

The tendency of some of your duties, is to narrow the mind, by confining its attention to minute details; of others to beget morose and unsocial feelings; and of all, to isolate you from the rest of the community, and to disincline you to sympathize in the concerns of common life. A love of elegant letters, and an acquaintance *with general* literature, are admirably adapted

to counteract these tendencies. They are a valuable help to the social principle; they enlarge and refine the intellect; they promote civility and refinement of manners; they warm and invigorate the soul.

Besides—the soldier's life is of an unfixed and desultory character; at some times, irksome and fatiguing; at others, requiring but little labour, or even presenting long periods of leisure. All experience has shown, that in these circumstances there is much of positive and dangerous exposure; many, in all armies, have found them more fatal than charge or escalade, or than even the forlorn hope in "the imminent, deadly breach." A taste for letters, is one of the best preservatives against the temptations and hazards of inaction; it relieves the tedium of monotonous duty; it turns what might otherwise be spent in idle dissipation, or perhaps in the grosser vices, into a season of refreshing and healthful entertainment. It was, therefore, with great fitness, that at an early day, a society devoted to the cultivation of letters, was formed in this institution; and if its objects have not hitherto been pursued with a degree of steadiness and zeal proportioned to their importance, the measures recently adopted to increase its efficiency and

usefulness, are the more honourable to their authors. These measures are regarded by those officially connected with you, and by the friends of the institution, as proofs of a generous ambition, and as pledges of future usefulness and honour. See to it, my friends, that these expectations be not disappointed.

After the demands already made upon your time, you will not expect me to say much as to the methods of creating and cultivating the literary taste. In general, this is to be done by the faithful and repeated perusal—the diligent study—of the best authors in the various branches of literature. The instructions given by the Professor of Rhetoric, and the text-books employed in this part of your studies, will have directed you to the principal works in each department; and the proper study of a comparatively small number of these, will be sufficient to impart a perception and relish of their beauties. In this case, too, the desire will not only "grow by what it feeds on;" but whilst it increases in strength, it will also be mellowed and refined.

As a means of giving method and certainty to the knowledge you have acquired, and of improvement in other respects, exercises in writing and speaking, will be found of essential

use. Such exercises, and especially those of the former kind, besides their general influence, will bear directly on the duties of your profession.

The military officer, as he advances in his career, has constant occasion for the use of the pen. He should therefore make it his study, to acquire, as soon as may be, the talent of writing in a clear and correct style. There is no species of business-papers, in which neatness and perspicuity are more desirable, than in the every-day reports and orders of the service. In general orders, and in important despatches, there is often room for the higher graces of composition; and good taste is always needed in preparing them. Unless you early addict yourselves to the habit of writing, and study with care the best models, there is danger that you may acquire a loose mode of narration, and a boastful and inflated style; than which nothing is more offensive in a military paper.

The orders and despatches of the greatest of living captains,—Wellington—recently published, have all the simplicity and severe elegance of a classic; and those of our own Washington deserve almost equal praise. The addresses and bulletins of Napoleon, though admirably adapted to the times in which they appeared, and to the

soldiers and people for whom they were intended, can seldom be safely imitated by the American soldier. They are, however, worthy his diligent study, as memorials of the rapid and daring genius of their author, and as one of the instruments of his success.

Such of your number, as before their entrance on military studies, enjoyed the advantages of classical instruction, should snatch, if it be possible, some portion of each day, to recall and extend their knowledge of the ancient writers. The laborious courses of study and exercise pursued in the academy, will not allow those of you who have no acquaintance with the classic tongues, to acquire them whilst here; but after your entrance into the army, you will find ample opportunity to do so, provided you begin without delay and pursue the object with zeal and perseverance. As the philosophy of grammar is the same in all languages; and as the French, which forms a part of your daily studies, is, in a great degree, derived from the Latin, you will find an accurate knowledge of the former, of much assistance in mastering the latter. This consideration should incite you, not to rest contented with such attainments in the French, as may merely enable you to un-

derstand the mathematical and military text-books contained in this language. There are also other reasons for giving your best efforts to the critical study of its structure and idioms. Independently of its connexion with the science of your profession, the literature contained in it, along with much to be reprobated and shunned, is rich in productions of the highest merit.

But whatever may be your attainments in other languages, or whether you be confined, by necessity, or of choice, to your own tongue, you will find in the latter an abundant supply of admirable works. He who will make himself familiar with the English Bible, with the essays of Addison, Johnson and Goldsmith; and with the poetry of Shakspeare and Milton, of Pope and Cowper, will almost certainly acquire a soundness and delicacy of taste, which will enable him to select from the tree of knowledge—still the tree of good and of evil—such of its other fruits as may safely be received.

It is essential to the acquisition of a true literary taste, that the moral nature be assiduously cultivated. It contains the deepest and purest fountains of the beautiful and the sublime; and he, whose soul is fullest of the generous emotions—who has most frequently sought, "in the

quiet and still air of delightful studies, the bright countenance of truth"—and who, with greatest faithfulness, has walked in the way of her commandments—will, other things being equal, be the best fitted for deriving pleasure and advantage from intellectual pursuits. It is for this reason, that I have placed the Bible at the head of the brief catalogue just given. Apart from its authority, on all questions of morals, as a revelation from Heaven, it contains more of beautiful and touching narrative; of pure and practical moral teaching; of sublime poetry and eloquence; than is to be found in any other book. Our common version, with the spirit of an original work, gives us, perhaps, the best specimen to which we can resort of pure and idiomatic English. Well then may it be made the basis of all intellectual culture; the touch-stone of doctrine; the standard of excellence in thought and in expression. It has peculiar claims in a mere literary point of view, on the attention of the soldier. The earliest of triumphal songs is to be found in the history of the Exodus; and after the lapse of thousands of years, it is yet unrivalled. In many of the later compositions of the Hebrew muse, there is the like union of the martial spirit with the highest fervours of devotion; and

the greatest hymnist of his nation and of the world, spent in active and perilous war a large portion of his life. In many of his odes, the circumstances and feelings which belong to the military profession, are frequently referred to; and he claims for it a peculiar dignity, by ascribing, more than once, his skill in the art of war, to the teachings of the Almighty.* The other portions of the Old Testament, and the whole of the New, are not less worthy the regard of every cultivated mind. Let the Bible, then, be ever included in your course of literary study, and let it hold the same rank in such a course, as would be given to it in a system of ethics.

It is one of the dangers attendant on the cultivation of the literary taste, that it begets a fondness for general reading, which, if not kept within due limits, may interfere with primary duties, and indispose the mind to sober thought. In the indulgence of this passion, care and discipline are therefore indispensable. By these means you may turn your ordinary reading—that which you can scarcely dignify with the name of study—to good account.

If you read poetry or works of fiction, let the

* Psalm xviii. 34; cxliv. 1.

productions you select be of the first order in point of sentiment and diction. Much of this species of our current literature is objectionable in these respects; and to improve the taste, nay even to preserve it from positive injury, much discrimination should be exercised. In choosing from this class of books, you will find it safer and more useful to resort to those standard works on which enlightened criticism has stamped its approving seal, than to snatch up the novelties which are daily issuing from the press. Guided by its decisions, you may find works of fiction which paint life and manners with faithfulness and judgment; others whose tales of heroic suffering or adventurous effort may give confidence and energy to virtue; and many which will acquaint you with the history of epochs and events, of lasting influence on the destinies of mankind. A great master of our own times — the peerless minstrel of northern Europe — after calling up, from the slumber of ages, the Genius of old Romance, and employing him, with distinguished success, in the metrical novel, resolved to make him subservient to the Muse of History; and straight there issued from his teeming brain a panoramic reproduction of the men and the scenes, *the habits* and institutions, the passions and con-

flicts, of past ages; giving, with such life and accuracy, even when coloured with his own peculiar prejudices, the very form and pressure of the times, and blending with his pictures so much of truth and nature, of wit, eloquence, and wisdom, as to found a new school in this department of letters—a school to which the statesman, the jurist, the soldier, and even the divine, may occasionally resort, not only for entertainment, but instruction. Several of our native writers have also entered this walk, and have done honour to themselves, and service to their country, by awakening the attention of our people to memorable passages in our revolutionary or colonial annals.

But whilst we may admit the merits of this species of works of imagination, it should never be forgotten, that they hold to real life and authentic history, only that inferior relation, in which a beautiful picture stands to the real landscape. The votary of nature, however his fancy may be delighted by the former, will resort to the latter as the source of his inspiration—the true object of his reverence.

History and biography, travels and didactic compositions, rather than works of a lighter nature, should therefore claim your first regard, even in your hours of leisure. Such are the literary trea-

sures of the present age, that, without going out of our own language, you may find an extensive collection of historical and other nutritious books, in which useful instruction is presented in a correct and polished style, and sometimes invested with a degree of interest more healthful and lasting than that which belongs to any work of fiction.

In this elevated department of letters, our own country has produced many excellent works, which, if not already known to you, should soon become so. Three of them have already established their claims to immortality. I allude to the Life and Voyages of Columbus, by Irving; the History of the United States, by Bancroft; and that of Ferdinand and Isabella, by Prescott. Each of these works is full of interest to Americans; and the last gives a narrative of the internal commotions which rocked the cradle of the infant queen, and of the successful wars in which she afterwards engaged, so stirring and romantic; and a picture of Spanish and Moorish Chivalry, so graceful and pleasing, as to make it a choice companion in the garrison and the camp. I can, as yet, only speak of the recently published Naval History of the United States, from a mere glance at its pages; but our great novelist is at home upon *the ocean, and I* cannot doubt the justice of the

commendations which his work has already won. Its bearing on your own profession will commend it to your perusal.

Whilst all correct and well-written history may be read with profit by military men, let me impress upon you, as a fit conclusion of this discourse, that the history of the American Revolution; of the principles which led to it; and of the sages and patriots who toiled for its accomplishment; should be thoroughly studied by the American soldier. Accustom your minds to the story of that mighty effort; let the self-denial, fortitude, and endurance, not less than the more active virtues, by which it was distinguished, be familiar to your thoughts; in your "heart of hearts" cherish the memory of the unequalled Chief and of his associates in arms; catch from the altars at which they worshipped, some portion of their fire; maintain the principles for which they toiled and bled; uphold the goodly fabric of prosperity and freedom, reared by their sacrifices, and of which you are to be the appointed guardians; and should it ever become necessary, pour out, like water, your blood in its defence.

Appeals like these, whilst they come, from the honoured graves of the great and good men who achieved our independence, to the hearts of all

Americans, address themselves, with peculiar emphasis to the inmates of this Academy. You are surrounded with associations admirably adapted to awaken a generous enthusiasm in the pursuit of knowledge, the love of country, and the practice of virtue. Science spreads before you her choicest stores. From every corner of your encampment — from the casements of your academic halls — you converse with nature in her sublimest mood. In your daily rambles, History greets you with some lesson of instruction—telling you now of the father of his country—that noblest model of heroic virtue — and now of Kosciusko—the champion of liberty and the friend of man—and urging you to copy their examples and aspire to their renown. And that nothing may be wanting to enforce her precepts, she warns you, in the fate of Arnold, to shun the vices which fitted him for that act of shame and that career of guilt, by which his name has been forever linked, in the memory of Americans, with that of him who betrayed the Saviour of mankind.

With all your studies and pursuits; from every rock and glen; from the majestic river which rolls beneath your feet, and from the mountain *tops* which point your thoughts to Heaven; *from the parental* hearths round which your

affections so love to linger; from your hoping, confiding country; and above all, from Him who gave you a nature capable of enjoying the exhibitions of his power, of tracing his wondrous ways, and of kindling with lofty and virtuous emotions, there comes a voice to instruct, to warn, to cheer you. To those of you who are about to exchange the exercises and pleasures of this seat of science, for the responsibilities and trials of active life, its tones are fraught with a solemnity and tenderness which you only can feel, and which should prompt you, with every reminiscence of a spot so hallowed, to heed and to obey the lessons it enjoins. "Put on,"—such is the exhortation it addresses to you all— "Put on the whole armour of right principles; march, with unfaltering step, in the path of duty, making diligence and integrity, truth and justice, the companions of your way; proclaim against all vicious inclinations and each low desire, an exterminating war; contend for the mastery in this sternest of conflicts; strive for that brightest of victorious wreaths—the chaplet which adorns the brow of him who rules his spirit, who vanquishes his passions, who fights 'the good fight' of faith and virtue;—so shall *you be* enabled to fill up the measure of action